AVERROES TODAY

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Enlightenment
East and West

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No one should be definitely
called an unbeliever for
violating unanimity on
a point of interpretation.
Ibn Rushd

Sapere aude!
"Have courage to exercise
your own understanding"
Kant

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Averroes Today

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Averroes Today

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What use is Averroes today?

We hope that the Journal of ***Averroes Today*** can provide an adequate answer to this question. Averroes, in the modern world, is not a mere philosopher. He is a politician masqué. Indeed, we can claim that it is this hidden aspect which has changed the face of Europe and has been one of the essential factors that freed Europe from the seizure of the religious authority.

Averroes' main book, "The Decisive Essay on the Continuity between Religious Law and Philosophy", was not an exposition of ultimate truths, but a handbook for liberators and humanitarians. This book and others by Averroes survived the accusation that he was an atheist while he was one of the roots of European Enlightenment.

If we could revive Averroes and bring him up to date, would he be an animator of a second Enlightenment? What problems could he raise? Could he elaborate his concept of interpretation as an antidote to religious fundamentalism?

These are the basic questions that our Journal aims to address through the critical articles of

philosophers and scholars from diverse fields and cultures. The ultimate aim is to revive and use the philosophical ideas of Averroes as a springboard for a new dialogue between cultures within the context of the twenty first century and with a futuristic view.

The journal of ***Averroes Today*** is a bilingual (English/ Arabic) multidisciplinary, Jouanal It is published by **Ibn Rushd and Enlightenment Infernational Association**, an affiliate of the **Afro-Asian Philosophy Association** which is a non-governmental international organisation affiliated to the **International Federation of Philosophical Societies (FISP).** The two versions of the Journal are co-edited by Mourad Wahba and Mona Abousenna The Arabic version is a translation of the English articles included here, plus other material written originally in Arabic to suit the Arab reader. The local publisher and distributor is Dar Kebaà, in Cairo.

The Editors

AAPA's Message

Mourad Wahba

The idea of the foundation of the Afro-Asian Philosophy Association, (AAPA) goes back to the year 1975 and, precisely, to the XVII Pakistani Philosophical Congress held in Lahore in October 1975, where I submitted a paper entitled "Authenticity and Modernization in the Third World"[1]. A vivid and hot debate followed during which the senior professors of philosophy hit hard at the pivotal ideas in my paper, whereas the junior scholars were enthusiastic and supportive. At the end of the conference it was decided that the controversial ideas should be discussed thoroughly and deeply at a special conference gathering together Afro-Asian philosophers. I was then elected to organize that conference, which was ultimately held in Cairo in March 1978 as the First Afro-Asian Philosophy Conference, on the theme "Philosophy and Civilization".

Going back to my pivotal ideas that caused the birth of AAPA, they could be presented in a nutshell as follows: the civilizational gap between the developed and the developing countries cannot be bridged unless the developing countries pass through

two phases that have been already undergone by the developed countries, that is, sovereignty of reason and commitment of reason to change reality for the benefit of the mass-man.

Now, the crucial question that has to be raised *is* the following:

How can the two phases come into existence?

In my own opinion, this is impossible without the Reformation and the Enlightenment. The Reformation is based on the free inquiry of the sacred books. It is well recognized that Luther's mission was to drive away the foggy mists of superstition and to liberate the Christians from the totalitarian character of the Catholic Church. In addition, the Calvinist doctrine claimed that success is a mark of God's favor, and this claim impelled the Puritans in England to be industrious. And that is why, according to Max Weber, the industrial revolution began. Then emerged the Enlightenment which surpassed the Reformation. It liberated reason not only from the ossified church authority but from any authority except that of reason.This claim was expressed deeply and clearly in Kant's famous definition of Enlightenment as "man's release from his self incurred tutelage, for which he is himself

responsible[2] This definition means that man is responsible for conquering the state of immaturity, that is, the inability to use one's own reason without the guidance of another. Thus, the free use of reason is the essence of Enlightenment. Due to this intellectual atmosphere, that was coping with the rising up of the bourgeois class, the French revolution emerged.

In this sense, we could conclude that the Enlightenment was one of the essential elements that constituted the future vision of the French revolutionaries. And this leads to the conviction that without a future vision there is no possibility of achieving neither the movement of society nor the movement of history. For, in my opinion, history moves, neither from the past nor from the present but rather from the future. Likewise, history does not move from the status quo but from the pro quo. Therefore, history does not move in a straight line, for otherwise it becomes mechanical, nor does it move in circles, for that would make it repetitive. Rather, history moves in spirals in the sense that it includes two processes, that is, progress and regression.

How could we then differentiate between progress and regression, and what is the criterion of differentiation?

In my own opinion, the criterion is related to the origin of civilization itself. When civilization emerged, man invented the agricultural technique to overcome the food crisis that took place in the hunt age. In essence, this was a transformation of man from being passive towards nature to being active and creative, from being in a horizontal relation with nature in the hunting age to being in a vertical relation with her in the agricultural age. In other words, man became conscious of his capability of transcending nature.

But what is the essence of this transcendence?

To answer this question I refer to Marx. In **The German Ideology** he says; "At the end of every labor-process we get *a* result that already existed in the imagination of the laborer at its commencement."[3] Thus, human labor involves transcending the actual reality for the sake of transforming it. And transformation, in this case, means creating new relations. Marx refers then to the development of speech out of the needs of human intercourse, and says about animals: "Where there exists a relationship, it exists for me. The animal does not relate itself to anything, it does not relate at all. For the animal, its relation to others does not exist as a relation."[4]

Consequently, reason proceeds not from facts per se but from facts in relation to other facts and in relation to human reason. In this sense, knowledge is not a description of facts but an interpretation of facts. But this interpretation is not confined to speculation, but is rather linked to praxis, as long as the essence of man lies in transforming reality. Thus, we can define reason as the faculty of practico-transcendental interpretation. And this definition involves a substantial relation between reason and revolution, if we mean by revolution the radical transformation of reality. Consequently, reason is revolutionary by its very nature.

But this was not the case before Marx. Aristotle's theory of forms ended in a static hierarchy, and his concept of the passage from potentiality to actuality excluded any sign of reason's activity. Descartes interpreted the correspondence between innate ideas and reality in a static way and not within an evolutionary concept of man. Locke and Hume observed about the factors constituting the origin of ideas, that they consist in the maximum part played by experience , in addition to a minimum part played by the organizing factors which Locke referred to by the global phrase "operations of our mind" known as reflection, and which Hume reduced to the association of ideas.

Kant could have completely surpassed Descartes, Locke and Hume if he had developed the constructive character of reason. Instead he was only satisfied with this character at the start and not throughout the whole system.


Kant

And this defeat is due to the priori forms of sensibility and understanding which are limited to organizing a phenomenal reality. But in spite of this defeat, it could be stated that Kant has been the forerunner of my definition of reason as the faculty of practico-transcendental interpretation.

Then came Marx and elaborated the epistemological and sociological consequences of the essential feature of reason which is qualified by changing reality. This consequence was put in a nutshell in the most fundamental proposition in his "Theses on Feuerbach: "The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways, the point, however, is to change it." This proposition seems to be a demand that we should renounce interpretation of reality and replace it by revolutionary action. Henry Aiken, for instance, writes: "The philosophical problem, said Marx, is not to understand the world,

but to change it."[5] This statement, attributed to Marx, is utterly absurd, for it means that in order to change the world we must deny the need to understand it. However, Marx's proposition is a thesis which can be correctly understood only in the whole context of his teaching. Marx was counterposing the revolutionary interpretation of reality to the conservative interpretation. That is why we should read the Xith Thesis as announcement of a new theory of knowledge or, in other words, a revolutionary theory of reason. And this is why Lenin wrote: "Without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement." He could have written: without revolutionary reason there can be no revolutionary philosophy. But, I hope that this statement of mine does not get misunderstood on the pretence that having a revolutionary reason or a revolutionary philosophy is sufficient to transform reality. It is neither the one nor the other, but both in an organic unity with the consciousness of the mass-man. And this was the pivotal idea behind the Fifth International Philosophy Conference that I organized in Cairo in November 1983 under the title: "Philosophy and the Mass-Man". And here I would like to quote a few phrases from my conference call



Karl Marx

:"The real challenge for philosophy, or the survival of philosophy in a Mass-Man age, is to respond to the actual change represented by this crucial phenomenon: Mass-Man. In other words, if philosophers continue to formulate topics and tackle them in isolation from the masses and continue to address each other only in the future, the Mass-Man will replace the present elite by becoming the new intelligentsia. Accordingly, there should be a new philosophy to cope with the new "elite" who will emerge not as a minority but as a majority. Hence, it could be important to ask: how can philosophy promote the Mass-Man to be the future master of himself and his world? How can the Mass-Man's knowledge of reality be influenced by the theoretical construction of the philosophers? Could the knowledge of reality, given by the mass-man, be a philosophical task?

Now, could it be the task of African and Asian philosophers and scholars to be involved in responding to these questions?

I am aware of the fact that over the past two or three decades, the prevailing research done by Afro-Asian philosophers focused on the world views and value systems of traditional Afro-Asian societies.

But the question is: to what extent might this kind of philosophic research be considered as a crystallization of ethno-philosophies?

Anyhow, it is not the purpose of this article to answer this question. I am putting this question only to draw the attention to the fact that philosophy from the beginning was not ethnic in its Weltanschauung or its value system. Socrates, for instance, was put to trial not for ethnic reasons but for denying the gods and corrupting the youth. But the hidden charge was that Socrates used to philosophize in the market-place trying to uproot the false dogmas from the mass-reason through the dialogue with others.

At this point I have nothing to say. It is up to the would-be members of the Afro-Asian Philosophy Association and its offhost, the newly formed Ibn Rushd and Enlightenment Interuatinal Association, to formulate the would-be philosophy that will emerge from their interaction with the Mass-Man who "is in search of". The reason for not ending this phrase - "in search of" - is due to my concept of 'ism', that is, the human evolution shows that man is in search of an "ism" which has to be negated by a deism for the sake of constructing a re-ism. The two continents are still, up to this day and age, in the de-ism. And this doubles the task of the Afro-Asian philosophers.

Notes

1- This paper was delivered at the International Seminar held in Nairobi in August, 1985. Minor alterations were made to suit this publication.

2- Kant, "What is Enlightenment?", *On History*(edit) L.E. Beck (New York: Library of the Liberal Arts, Bobbs- Merrill, 1963),p.3.

3- Marx , *German Ideology* (Moscow, 1964),p.47.

4- Ibid.

5- Henry Aiken *The Age of Ideology* (Boston, 1957), p. 185

Philosophical News

a. The First Special International Conference on Ibn Rushd and Enlightenment

The Afro-Asian Philosophy Association (AAPA) held its Fifth Conference in Cairo from 5-8 December 1994, under the title First Special International Conference on "Ibn Rushd and Enlightenment".

The Conference was organized in collaboration with New York State University (Buffalo), and was supported by Goethe Institute and the British Council and sponsored by the League of Arab States, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Culture and the Supreme Council of Culture.

The purpose of the conference was two-fold, to spread the spirit of the Enlightenment throughout the Arab and Islamic world through the rationalist philosophy of Ibn Rushd as an antidote to religious fundamentalism, and to use this philosophy as a bridge between the Islamic world and the West, leading thus to peace and development. The other purpose was to prepare for the world celebration of Ibn Rushd's 800 anniversary in 1998.

The conference was successful by academic as well as non-academic standards. On the academic level, all the participants were highly specialized eminent philosophers and scholars from four

continents: four from USA, four from Europe, two Arabs, three from Africa, four from Asia, and two from Latin America in addition to ten Egyptian participants, including the organizers. The papers and discussions highlighted the philosophical gap between Al-Ghazali and Ibn Rushd, which has been a highly significant issue in the history of Islamic civilization and continues to present a problematic until today.

On the non-academic level, the professors who did not present papers participated actively in the discussion. The Egyptians who attended and took part in the discussions exceeded fifty persons. The total number of participants, discussants and audience was about one hundred.

The main lesson to be learned for the future is the necessity of the search for issues closely related to Enlightenment, Fundamentalism, Dogmatism, Secularization, to be tackled in similar conferences.

Two proceedings were published, the English version in USA by Prometheus Books, and the Arabic version in Cairo by Third World Press.

As a result of the conference, and as one of its recommendations, Ibn Rushd and Enlightenment International Association was established. This Association held an international conference in 1996 on "Creativity and Pax Mundi," and another one in 1998 on "Teaching Philosophy".

b. Averroes and his Influence : Remembering G. Hourani

On the 12th of April 1996 the international conference on "Averroes and his influence: Remembering George Hourani" was held. The conference was organized by AAPA in collaboration with the State University of New York at Buffalo where the conference took place as a follow-up conference to the First Special International Conference that was held in Cairo (December 1994) on "Ibn Rushd and Enlightenment, " organized also by AAPA. The Conference was held at the Inquiry Centre in Amherst.

The aim of the Buffalo Conference was to use the philosophy of Averroes as a bridge between the West and the Islamic world in order to avoid the would-be clash between both cultures.

There was a hot debate among the participants concerning the concept of interpretation and whether Averroes had a definite definition of this concept or not and whether this concept as conceptualized in his book "The Decisive Essay on the Continuity between Religious Law and Philosophy" could be considered as the foundation of hermeneutics as conceived by the western philosophers. The debate also tackled the issue of the possibility of considering the philosophy of Averroes as the root of Western Enlightenment.

c. Philosophy and Culture Shift

On May 2-4 1996 a 5th AAPA conference was held in conjunction with the Korean Philosophical Association. The theme of the conference was "Philosophy and Culture Shift'. It was stated in the invitation that the theme means the shift in cultural paradigm, a shift from the dominance of the Western conception to some other, non-western emerging synthesis. When the founder and honorary President of AAPA (Mourad Wahba) received the invitation he immediately went into correspondence with the chairman of the organising committee, Prof. Hyo-Myung Kim Joe, protesting against the theme of the conference as follows:

" In your invitation I notice the following:

the theme of your conference, or what you refer to as the "Fifth AAPA Conference, is "Philosophy and Culture Shift". This means that the question which the conference raises is:

Which culture are you going to shift away from? Is it the Western culture or the enlightened culture which AAPA has been advocating since its first conference?

The so-called "Fifth Afro-Asian Philosophical Conference" is announced as "the first major non-

Western philosophical meeting." In this context you have excluded the Western philosophers with whom AAPA is supposed to establish a dialogue.

Thus, it is clear that you have violated the raison d' être of AAPA.

Accordingly, in my capacity as the founder of AAPA I decline to participate in your conference".

Farewell for ever to Henry Odera Oruka


Odera Oruka

Henry Odera Oruka, one of the founding members of AAPA, its first Secretary General and later its Vice-President, died on Saturday, December 13, 1995 in an accident along Nairobi's Mbagathi Way near Nyayo Highrise Estate. He was knocked down by a lorry and died instantly.

He is one of Africa's best known and widely read philosophers.

He was the founder and chairman of the Department of Philosophy at the University of Nairobi. He authored and co-authored over eight books and 50 articles in academic journals.

He was an M.A. graduate of Wayne State University in Michigan, U.S.A., he got his Ph. D. from University of Uppsala in Sweden.

He was until his death the chairman of the Philosophical Association of Kenya and vice-president of the Inter-African Council of Philosophy and a member of the World Federation of Philosophical Societies (FISP).

He organized the second AAPA conference in Nairobi in 1981 on the theme "Philosophy and Culture" and is editor of the proceedings.

He hosted the World Conference on Environmental and Food Security and recently organized the World Future Studies Conference in Nairobi. In 1991 he hosted Africa's First World Conference of Philosophy in Nairobi.

Among his recent books are "Philosophy and Nature and Environmental Ethics", "Punishment and Terrorism in Africa", "Trends in Contemporary Philosophy" and "Sage Philosophy".

His distinguished contributions earned him many honors. In 1989 he was selected for inclusion into the prestigious series, "Philosophers on their Own".

He is remembered for his strong support of the controversial Luo custom of wife-inheritance.



The Widow of Prof Henry Odera Mrs Olivia Oruka (centre). talks to reporters yesterday at her Nairobi West estate house. At left is her daughter. Mchieng and the Oruka's sister. Mrs Gaudenecia Agaya. Prof Oruka died in a road accident along Mbagathi Way. Nairobi. on Saturday. Mrs Oruka said there were conflicting reports about her husband's death. (Picture by PAUL WAWERU)

Reason and Action in Africa

Odera Oruka

What most people know as *Enlightenment,* at least in its historical context, is the awakening which had its most dominant period in the 17th and 18th century Western thought.

This is a period which Thomas Paine termed the "Age of Reason". It was conceived that given the *right Reason* all truth is ultimately knowable. The world, it was taken, is governed by a natural law which ensures that each stage is a development of the Overall Universal progress.

The German philosopher, Leibniz (1646-1716) postulated the "Principle of Sufficient Reason": Everything has a reason why it is as it is.

Isaac Newton propounded the Law of Universal Gravitation (1686).

Enlightenment in this sense, was an era in which reason and' rational investigation became universal methods of all objective knowledge.

It was, therefore, not surprising that enlightenment would frighten religious and political orthodoxies. Natural Right Reason and Law were seen as independent of Christian religion and rigorous

intellectual mathematical reasoning was the means for establishing truth. Religious revelation became noticeable but was no longer the standard.

Enlightenment, in a political world, distinguished the natural law operating in nature as it is, as well as for persons and human society. In the first case, the law explains things as they merely are, in the second case it prescribes to humans what ought to be. But as most human beings are far from what they ought to be, enlightenment applied to politics, became critical and revolutionary.

Enlightenment in the West and East had its latest development in the Marxist revolutions. The question now is :

Would the end of Marxism (if at all) mean the death of enlightenment in the regions where Marxist revolutions took place?

It is, however, important to note that the modern alternative to Marxism i.e. free enterprise and market economy, offer a classical case of inhuman exploitation and economic anarchy. And these two cases are each or together a negation of the culture of right reason.

IBN RUSHD, or Averroes, is one of the most outstanding thinkers and scientists in the Islamic

World. Enlightenment, the way it came to be in 17th and 18th century Europe was not really a creation of its proponents. It was an attempt to recapture the lost philosophic glory and practice of ancient Greece.

Coming between the ancient Greece and the Enlightenment of 17th century, Averroes reformulating Aristotle postulated that Soul is not immortal while the intellect is. Averroes was for enlightenment and against all unjustifiable orthodoxies.

It is no wonder then that he was excommunicated by the religious orthodoxy of his time. A precedent of his, Algazali, wrote in the *Destruction of Philosophers* that since all truth was in the *KORAN* there was no need for speculation. IBN RUSH responded in: *Destruction of the Destruction*, that for him religion is only an allegorical form of philosophic truth, a fact which the main stream orthodox believers do not grasp.

One relevant historical question is : to what extent was or is there an age of reason (enlightenment) in Africa?

I wish to leave this question to the historians because I want to concentrate on a question which is of most immediate significance: To what extent did

reason succeed or fail to liberate Africa after the collapse of colonialism?

In a paper which was presented to the First Afro-Asian Philosophy Conference in Cairo, in 1978, entitled "Philosophy and Humanism in Africa" I wrote:

> "In *Arid* (African Republic of Inhumanity and Death) the group that has the political power identifies itself and its power with the moral law and moral good. Truth is recognized to be nothing but the expression of the will of and interest of supreme political personality. Opposition of parties, institutions and personalities are branded as the very opposite of the truth and good of the nation. Opposition in *Arid* is treated as nothing but the incarnation of falsehood and evil. Its existence is supposed to spell doom for the Republic. It must then be wiped out; and it is indeed ruthlessly wiped out". (p.121)

These were lines read over sixteen years ago. Since then the situation worsened, culminating even in the collapse of the reality of a state in some countries: by the 1990s Liberia, Somalia, Chad, Rowanda, Burundi and to some extent, Sudan, had

literally collapsed as states. The wiping out of any opposition resulted in national self destruction.

In Nigeria, Zaire, Algeria, Zambia, Malawi, Kenya opposition suffered irreparably in the 1980s, and even in the 1990s most of them have not found their grounds. The reality is that truth and right are with the supreme political authority, and both reason and opposition are considered evil which must be wiped out.

After about three decades of post-independence, *disenlightenment* in Africa, and the end of the Cold War a new glimmer of hope appeared on the scene: Africa was to democratize and opposition parties were receiving their legitimation. This heralded a new age of some sort of enlightenment, an age in which human authority and will are to dialogue with reason and natural law. Will this succeed? Only the future can tell, though in our continent brute action and dogmas are often stronger than reason and enlightenment.

One aspect of any nation, which is the real custodian of reason and enlightenment, is the Academia. But experience in the three decades of post-colonial Africa shows that university academic institutions which have not collapsed remain centres of learning which are run by the whims of those in

political authority. The resident academic administrators in these institutions are merely fearful subordinates to the supreme political authority. They are appointed and dismissed at will and through radio messages, not through formal letters. They are ignorant even of their own terms and conditions of service. And they cannot even ask for clarification from the relevant bodies. They cannot do so because their own will is totally subdued by the authority and whims of those in political power and who force them to endorse and implement directives which any right reason would dismiss as absurdities.

The scholars who find themselves subjects of this sort of academic administration become demoralized. Some quit for greener patches abroad; while others stay on as demoralized subjects waiting for their death.

If opposition and Academia currently offer no hope for the Age of Reason in Africa, where else can we turn for hope? May be the masses, women, and youth could offer the hope?

The masses usually are the most authentic and enduring aspect of every nation.

But the masses are never the imitators or protectors of enlightenment. As my friend Mourad Wahba has observed, since 399 BC when Socrates

was condemned to death there was a rupture between philosophy and the masses. He refers to this as "Rupture in History".


Socrates

"This event happened in the year 399 BC on the occasion of Socrate's condemnation to death owing to impiety, corrupting young men and denying the gods, This was the apparent cause of his death. But what was behind it? It was, according to Wahba, Socrate's endeavors to unmask the roots of the illusions of the pseudo-absolute blazing the trial for the passage to the total development of man. Socrates was trying to achieve this task within the mass-man and that is why he was dangerous" (p. 17)

Wahba finds two types of reason embedded in the *Euthyphro*_ "Official reason (for the rulers) and the "mass-reason" (for the mass culture). Nietzsche had advised higher men to depart from preaching in the market-place because it is infested with the masses who cannot but misunderstand the preaching.

In spite of all this, Wahba still returns philosophy to Socrates: "It will be Socratic in a modernized way". (p. 21)

Yes, but before we reach this stage we shall need a thorough overhaul in the current political, academic and traditional cultures in Africa. The intelligentsia and the masses must enter into a dialogue. This is one way to ensure the abolition of *Official reason*, which today in Africa is the most formidable stone against enlightenment in Africa.

In her paper entitled: "Absolutes and Development in Contemporary Arab Thought" Mona Abousenna competently explains the "oppressor / oppressed dichotomy as the ruler/masses dichotomy. The ruler has absolutized himself and stolen God's identity card. He becomes a tyrant with the mask of God. The masses see no legitimacy in liberating themselves. And in this sense "the masses are doomed to be eternally trapped in the illusion, since within totalitarian systems, the prosecutor and the judge are always one and the same person". (p. 54)

Most of the leaders who pioneered Africa to independence, and the military upstarts who removed the pioneers saw themselves, as President Mobuto recently put it, as the "Patriarchs of Society".

As patriarchs they are not to be subjected to the routine rule of law. They are the embodiment of national justice, and both the constitution and the judiciary are mere functions of the national

justice. And this in reality is no more than a manifestation of the dialectics of the whims of the supreme political authority.

To what extent are the authority institutions of Women's liberation an insurance for the Age of Reason and Enlightenment in Africa?

Various donors have rightly established that "woman" is a suppressed personality in Africa as elsewhere. Their calculation is that by liberating the African Woman, we shall be liberating the home, the youth, the masses and indeed the society. This is also what those who are for the age of reason hope for.

There's however, a risk that part of the women lib will turn out (unexpectedly) to have been an occasion for creating an elite dominant and dominating females who have no taste for the masses (male or female) and who prefer to entertain themselves at the high tables with the perennial male autocrats.

We wish that this will not be so, but let us take the precaution.

In Africa the programmes for gender equality and women's liberation remain a compromise between the male dominated governing elites, the donor communities and the elite women who lead such

programmes. There is no clear indication that the programmes are worked out between the leaders and the suffering masses and rural women and youth. This could end up as representation without consultation.

To ensure the age of reason, the women's lib movements should ensure that the *right reason* is not just for the female gender, it must be for all the oppressed and ultimately for humanity in general. The former oppressed who now wish to oppress others is a negation of the culture of right reason. Perhaps this was the pitfall of the Soviet block's Marxism blazing the banner of the dictatorship of the proletarians.

Notes

Mourad Wahba (ed) Philosophy and Mass - Man, cairo, Anglo- Egyption, bookshop, 1985.

Mone Abousenna, Absolutes and Development in contenpo, Odera Oika & Masolo (ed), philosophy and Cultures, Nairobi, 1983.

Language as Culture*

Mona Abousenna

Language as culture means reducing language to culture. In order to understand this kind of reduction one has to analyse language and culture.

In his invaluable pamphlet, entitled "The Part Played by Labour in the Transition from Ape to Man", Engels asserts that:

> Mastery over nature began with the development of the hand, with labour, and widened man's horizon at every new advance... On the other hand, the development of labour necessarily helped to bring the members of society closer together by increasing cases of mutual support and joint activity, and by making clear the advantage of this joint

* This paper was delivered as a plenary lecture at the 16th congress of the International Federation of Modern Languages and Literatures (FILLM) held in Budapest in August 1984, on the theme "Change in Language and Literature."
In 1987, the author was nominated for the membership of the Executive Council of the International Association of Comparative Literature (AILC) and in 1988 she was elected as the first Arab scholar to that post.

> activity to each individual. In short, men in the making arrived at the point where they had something to say to each other. Necessity created the organ.[1]

Engels concludes, thus, that the characteristic difference between the troupe of monkeys and human society is the process of labour, from which and in which language originated. While the lower animals share with man the beginnings of the natural language, they hardly get beyond it. The human easily goes on to higher stages.

Now, how and why does this happen?

The difference between the natural language that does not get beyond modulated sounds produced by animals, and the human artificial language is that in the latter the word is considered to be the sign of idea.

Ideas, by time, became more complex through man's creative, productive potential to master and transform nature, and language had to keep up with this ever-widening and developing knowledge. Tylor observes that:

> ... comparatively few and plain expressions had sufficed for man's early

> rude condition, but now more and more terms had to be added for the new notions, implements, arts and offices, and relations of more highly organized society. Etymology shows how much new words are made by altering and combining old ones, carrying on old words from the old state of things to do duty to the new, stuffing their meanings, and finding in any new thought some resemblance to an old one that would serve to give it a name.[2]

Thus, in the course of the historical development of language, the meaning of words changes and the development of meaning proceeds from elementary to highly complicated forms and, eventually, not only the meaning of a word, but the very character of the reflection of life condensed in the world changes in the course of the development of thinking. In the process of further development the meaning of a word, which appeared later, may lose its connection with the original one and, thus, be infinitely distant from it or entirely new. For example, a pen was originally a feather and when steel pens were invented for the purpose of writing, the original meaning was lost in current usage. On close analysis it can be seen

that the meaning of many words have changed while their phonetic representation has remained the same. In this sense, words are not merely words, counters in some philological game. Words express ideas, and language refers to, expresses and transforms experience. It is, therefore, changing and changeable. It is also the index of the manner in which its speakers organize, through the structural-semantic system of that tongue, their experience of the world in which they live. For example, since the Greeks knew no other language worth studying it was quite normal that they assumed that there was some invariable correlation between the structure of their language and the universal forms of thought. Thus, thought and language form a unity like body and mind, or as Lee Benjamin Whorf observes: "A change in language can transform our appreciation of the cosmos."[3]

In order to elaborate this relation between language and thought, let us proceed further and ask the following question:

> What do we have in mind when we use such words as saying, talking and the like?

The English word "say" is a causative form cognate with 'sees '. So the word "say" can be traced to roots signifying 'light' so that to "say something" seems originally to have meant to 'bring into light'. The Greek *phemi* (say) is connected with *phaino* (bring to light) and so with *phos* or light. The Latin *dicere* (say) is cognate with Greek *deiknumi* and with German *zeigen*, both meaning 'show', while all three words probably go back to an old Indo-European root, *di*, signifying bright or shining. These connections with light are not confined to Indo-European verbs of saying. When we turn to the Semitic language, we are told that the common Hebrew verb *mar* (say) is connected with the idea of 'showing '.

Thus, the fundamental characteristic of saying something is that what is talked about is brought into the light. To put it in another way, what is talked about is made unhidden. But saying shows itself to be a phenomenon that constitutes a triadic relation. The person who says something, the matters about which he says it, and the person or persons to whom he says it. But we have to take into account even a fourth factor, namely, what is said, i.e. language. It is language which mediates the triadic relation.

This complex relation, thus schematized, may be conveniently called discourse-situation. That is why

the logical positivists erred when they tended to treat language as something existing in a vacuum, as an abstraction from the discourse situation. We should reject this kind of abstraction if we consider language functionally, in its concreteness. But the discourse refers to something, to the subject-matter, and the language is again the medium through which such referring is made. Thus, language refers to something beyond itself. In this respect Walter Benjamin makes the interesting remark when he writes about the task of the translator, stating that "languages are not strangers to one another, but a priori and apart from all historical relationships, interrelated in what they want to express ".[4] Benjamin adds that this expression, at the outset, could be called pre-literary and has inevitably exercised some influence on literary creativity, not only with respect to the themes tackled, but also to the treatment of such themes. In this respect one could cite a number of key-words to verify the strict connection between language and thought in cultural praxis.[5]

The philological approach to language, used in the seventeenth-century European universities, concerns the study of the specific culture of a nation. This approach to a given language treats the latter

primarily, almost exclusively, as a tool for getting at the cultural ideas assumed to exist in the literature of that speech community.

This brings us to the relation between language and literature. In his pursuit to control and change nature at the dawn of civilization, man was driven by the necessity to understand, control and appropriate nature by means of two contradictory, yet complimentary, activities of the human mind, namely mythos and logos, each representing two dialectically related universes of discourse. The unifying element in these two contradictory activities is the principle of causality. In the case of mythos, the logic of causality is irrational and non-scientific, and depends rather on intuition and magic to fill in the gaps resulting from man's actual impotence to control nature. Through magic man tried to add power to the hunting weapons by inscriptions, charms, prayers or invocation of spirits. Logos, on the other hand, is represented by discursive argumentation based on premises and conclusions, where the relation between cause and effect is rational. The history of literature registers this dialectical evolution from mythos to logos.[6]

In this sense, literature corresponds to and reflects the evolution of human civilization. Tragedy

began in ritual and myth. In his famous definition of tragedy, Aristotle puts forward six parts that constitute tragedy, stressing that plot is the most important of them, the first principle and soul of tragedy. To borrow Aristotle's own terminology, plot, which In Greek is mythos is the "prime mover" of drama.[7] Evidence is provided by primitive ritual and sympathetic magic, and by the fact that in magical ceremonies the abstract forces of good and evil are represented by personified forces.[8]

Hence, all literature is language in a state of special use, alternating between mythos and logos, or between the super natural and the natural.

Now, as regards European and Arabic literatures, I am going to analyse comparatively what happened to them from the point of view of the alternation between mythos and logos. European literature surpassed the mythos-phase and reached the logos-phase, whereas Arabic literature had not. Our frame of reference is the uprising of hermeneutics, or the science of interpretation, in the West. Its history, from Aristotle to Schleiermacher and Dilthey, has been briefly touched upon by Bultmann whose own method of demythologizing is perhaps the most notable contribution to theological hermeneutics in

recent times.[9] Thus, theology could be equivalent to hermeneutics provided that theology is "God-talk".

Anyhow, the goal of the school of interpretation is that a new understanding should be gained. Heidegger mentions that he came across the term "hermeneutics" for the first time when he was studying theology in a Jesuit seminary. [10] At that time he was concerned with the problem of the relation between the words of the holy scriptures and the thoughts (intended meaning) of systematic theology. Then he widened the problem into that of the relation between language and Being. But Heidegger thinks that the latter problem is linked up with the former and acknowledges that without the stimulus he had received from theology he would not have pursued his philosophical investigations.

I am favourably influenced by Bultmann's conception of hermeneutics as a process of demythologization. In this sense, religious myths are interpreted not cosmologically, but anthropologically or rather, existentially. Consequently, hermeneutics is not applied to the myth per se, but to man to whom the myth is addressed, and to the world in which man lives that is, to culture. In our hermeneutic approach to culture, language appears to be symbolic. Thus,

there is an organic unity between hermeneutics and symbolic language. For nowhere do we find a symbolic language without hermeneutics. The result is that where we do not find hermeneutics, we do not find symbolic language. In this sense, hermeneutics could be conceived of as the secularization of culture by reducing the sacred texts to their secular, i.e. cultural, origins. Such cultural analysis of language leads to the relative separation of language and culture, or to the secularization of culture by demythologizing language.

Consequently, any comparative study of European and Arabic languages implies, necessarily, the analysis of culture from the perspective of permanence and change. With regard to European languages, they evolved through hermeneutics, which was the result of the religious reformation. Hermeneutics as the interpretation of sacred languages, in Europe, led to a diversity of languages developing from the "mother language", Latin. In Arabic culture, the absence of hermeneutics led to the predominance of traditionalism and to the absolutization of language as expressed in poetry. This is due to the absence of any religious reformation, which supposedly would have been

based on a rational and critical examination of Arabic language as culture.

The second part of this study is the application of the analysis carried out in the first part (language in relation to culture in the Arab world) from a comparative perspective that proceeds from the assumption of the unity of civilization, a unity that implies cultural diversity. In order to carry out my analytic examination I have chosen two mutually illuminating critiques of the Arabic language and poetry, which could be considered as individual daring attempts at establishing a school of hermeneutics in the field of Arabic literary studies.

In what follows, I am going to make an attempt at a close comparative analysis of *Permanence and Change* by the Lebanese thinker, poet and critic, Adonis, and *On Pre-Islamic Poetry* by the Egyptian thinker, critic and novelist Taha Hussein.[11] My purpose is to show the direct impact of both studies on the present cultural reality of Arab societies, considering language as part of one and the same cultural totality.

In his brilliant, three-volume study Adonis shows that Arabic language, being the mirror of

Arabic culture, is traditionalist and repetitive and marks the predominance of permanence over change through the rejection of creativity, being a cultural and religious taboo, which is an obstacle to a rational, critical interpretation of language and culture. The result of this conservatism has been the preservation of one language and a variety of dialects, rather than languages. This absolutization of language as culture, and the absence of creativity means the stagnation of culture and the impossibility of a genuine socio-cultural change.


Thaha Hussein

In his unique study of Classical Arabic language and poetry, Taha Hussein, who is also surnamed "Dean of Arabic literature", reveals the secular, pagan roots of Islamic culture through a close textual analysis and interpretation of Pre-Islamic poetry, applying the Cartesian method of rational and critical investigation. The conclusion of his study is that what has been traditionally handed down and recognized as Pre-Islamic poetry is actually a later forgery written in the Islamic period.

In the introductory chapter, entitled 'Method of Study', Hussein writes:

I intend to introduce in literature the philosophic method propagated by Descartes at the beginning of this modern age, to investigate the truth of things.

It is well known to everyone that the basic rule of this method requires that the researcher give up all formerly acquired knowledge and embark upon the subject of his research with a free mind..."Let us adopt this method when we tackle our Classical Arabic literature and its history. [12]

Applying this method, Hussein sets off to compare what has been customarily recognized and referred to as "pre-Islamic poetry" (shi'r djahili) and the language of the Quran. He starts off by asking a fundamental question:

How could the Arab poets, who came from different Arab tribes, master the meters and rhyme schemes of standard Arabic language, despite the great differences in language and dialects? ... And how can we explain the absence of

> any clear relation between the different dialects and poetic metre practiced by Arab tribes?[13]

And he answers as follows:

> After Islam, the Arab tribes adopted in their literature another language different from their own, and other rules different from their own rules of poetry and language. That is, Islam imposed upon the Arabs one common language that is the language of the Quran and its dialect, which is the language and dialect of Quraish (the tribe from which Prophet Muhamed came and which became the ruling tribe after Islam).[14]

Then he compares this situation with early Greek poetry by giving the example of native or indigenous Greek and Ionian poetry and language:

> There are clear similar examples in old and modern languages other than the Arabic language. The indigenous poets of Greece had their poetry and rhyme schemes, while the Ionians had their own Ionian poetry and rhyme schemes.

> When Athens dominated the rest of the Greek islands, Ionian poetry and rhyme as well as Attican prose spread, and the indigenous Greek poets followed in their poetry and prose the rules adopted in Athens and adopted Ionian language after it was polished up by Athenian dialect, i.e. they gave up their own language, dialect and poetry and adopted those of the Athenians. The Arabs did the same thing after Islam: they gave up their literary language and all specifics of their language and adopted the language of the Quran and its dialect.[15]

He goes on to give other examples from French and Egyptian poetry to prove his point of view. Later he asks the question: What about Quranic language? And he answers:

> Quranic language dominated before Islam in poetry and prose due to the authority of the tribe of Quraish in trade. This authority continued when Mecca became politically autonomous due to its resistance against foreign influences

> and policies. Yet, the impact of Quraish did not surpass the boundaries of Higaz (region of Western Arabia on the Red Sea coast). After Islam, the sovereignty and authority of Quraish extended to languages and dialects and with it grew its religious and political power.[16]

He then asks another important, though hypothetical, question:

> Is it not possible that the so-called Pre-Islamic poetry (djahili), which neither represents the Arabs' life nor their mentality, religion or culture under djahilia (i.e. prior to Islam), could have been forged at a later period and attributed to them after Islam?[17]

Hussein finds a simple reply in a historical fact, namely, the habit and common practice of the Arabs during the third and fourth centuries B.C., during the Abbassid period, of using poetry for didactic and educational purposes, such as devising poetry as a confirmatory evidence in elucidating the rather difficult language of the Quran.

Forging poetry for reasons like that is not a unique phenomenon restricted to the Arabs alone, Hussein maintains. He proves that the literary phenomenon of poetic forgery was a common practice in ancient cultures. Poetry was forged and attributed to older poets, and people were deceived and believed in its validity: for example, the epic tales of the Iliad and Odyssey by Homer, or the history attributed to Herodot, which are now considered fairy tales and myths, but were adopted as reality by their contemporaries. This is because in European culture the mythical literary tradition, which was handed down by the ancient Roman and Greek cultures, was demythologized by modern critics who adopted the scientific method, whereby they combined history, literature, language, and philosophy, and could reduce the respective issues to their secular origins. Hence, they demythologized these formerly myths through their interpretation of language. On the other hand, we can hardly find any difference between the history of the Arabs as written by ancient historians, such as Ibn Ishak and Al-Tabari, and contemporary Arab historians. This is because contemporary Arab historians have not adopted the scientific method and

their minds are not purged yet of illusions and myths.[18] This means that the predominant feature in Arabic culture is mythos.

Hussein then goes on to record his observations about pre-Islamic poetry:

We have observed that Arab ulama (scholars) have used what they called Pre-Islamic poetry as a material whereby they could confirm the words of the Quran and hadith (Prophet's sayings) and their theological systems. This has been exaggeratedly done to the extent that one feels that this poetry was made to measure the Quran and hadith... One has to be extremely naive to believe ... that the words of the Quran are identical with the Arabs' eloquence.[19]

Hence, Hussein concludes that poetry after Islam was forged to be used as a political tool to prove the Arabs' power. For that purpose Arabic language specialists decided to study the Quran linguistically and to find evidence of the validity of its words and meanings, and to prove that the Quran is Arabic and identical with the Arabs' language. Therefore, they quoted some poetic verses to prove that certain words in the Quran are purely and undoubtedly Arabic. However, Hussein concludes the opposite from his

hermeneutical study of Classical Arabic poetry and language. He writes as follows:

> I believe that if there is an Arabic text which is undoubtedly Arabic and is, therefore, the most trustworthy and reliable source of Arabic language, it is the Quran. The Quranic verses and words should be used to judge the authenticity of what is called Pre-Islamic poetry and not vice versa.[20]

This conclusion is significant, for two reasons: first, it means that any interpretation of the Quran is verbal; secondly, it reveals a shocking truth, namely, that the language of the Quran is human. In other words, Hussein claims that the language of the Quran is the imitation of poetry. I think that this claim is the first one in Arabic culture. However, this claim was soon aborted by the religious authority, and the author was made to write another version, which was published the following year (1926) under the new title On Pre-Islamic Literature, with modifications and an additional chapter on prose literature. In the new version he omitted the parts that cast doubt on the creation of the Quran, as well as on some religious legends, which implicitly deny their sacredness.

In my own opinion, although Hussein adamantly advocated the application of the rational, scientific method in interpreting Arabic culture, his conception of modern Arabic culture was not completely correct. In his first book he predicted that the Arab mind would become Cartesian:

> If there is in Egypt today a group of people who support the old and others who are in favour of the new, this is because some of these people have been influenced by the European style whereas others have only assimilated a small portion of that influence or none at all. The increasing dissemination of Western science in Egypt and the tendency of individual and social efforts towards spreading Western science will eventually make our minds become Western, which will make us study the Arabic literature and history in the light of Cartesian method as the West did with the Greek and Roman literatures... The future is for Descartes' method, and not for the method of the ancients.[21]

However, actual history proved the opposite. Even today Hussein's book is regarded by the majority

of Arab intellectuals as a taboo. The printing of the second version is sufficient evidence and a clear indication of the failure of the author's view of the future. Besides, the present, ever-widening and widely spreading phenomenon of Islamic fundamentalism, in every area of social life in the Arab world, provides a clear historical evidence for the predominance of mythos over logos in present-day Arabic culture.

The historical distance between Taha Hussein's *On PreIslamic Poetry* (1926) and Adonis's *Permanence and Change* (1974) provides a unique opportunity of indirect criticism. In other words, the later work is an indirect critique of the earlier one in that it reveals its shortcomings and provides a scientific explanation of the earlier, abortive attempt made by Hussein to apply a scientific, rational method in understanding and interpreting Arabic culture and language. While Hussein, in his application of the Cartesian method, has reached the conclusion that the future of the Arab mind is to become Cartesian, Adonis gives a negative response to Hussein's view of the future almost fifty years later. He asserts the predominance of mythos over logos, as represented by the prevailing traditionalist trend within Arabic language and thought. By that he means the irrational, unscientific way of thinking, which he considers

responsible for the present situation in Arabic culture, which is characterized by a crisis in creativity.

Adonis explains, in an illuminating passage, the reasons for the belief in the precedence of Islam over djahilia (paganism) in the view of Arab traditionalists. He claims that this belief proceeds directly from the nature of the dogma itself and not, as Hussein mistakenly thinks, naivety, which is the only explanation he could find for the absolute acceptance of the validity of pre-Islamic poetry. According to Adonis:


Adonis

> Islam came as institutionalization of a new world utopia and a new system... However, the origin of Arabic culture is twofold: pagan (pre-Islamic or djahili), and Islamic. Since Islam is the end or culmination of the Arabic (i.e. human) utopia of the world and the cosmos, therefore, the beginning has been interpreted within the context of Islam. In this way, the end was turned into the beginning. For what is the end, or the

> ultimate, must also be the beginning, or the emanation, since it negates all that preceded it, that is, all that contradicts it and establishes the origins. In this sense, djahilia precedes Islam only formally (i.e. historically), while Islam precedes it essentially. Therefore, Islam is the origin and frame of reference, according to which anything and everything is identified and interpreted because from it everything emanates.[22]

Thus Adonis concludes that Arabic culture, in its totality, is religious and dogmatic and, therefore, rejects creativity. He also relates the dogmatic character of Arabic language to the problem of the creation of the Quran. The problem of the creation of the Quran, Adonis contends, transformed language from the natural level to that of revelation. Pre-Islamic language is natural language, whereas the language of the Quran is not. Therefore, Arabic language, beginning with the Quran, has been separated from natural language and has been connected with divine revelation. Thus, it broke away from human reason. Hence, there emerged a contradiction between language and nature. While nature is ever- changing and renewable, "revelation-

language" is whole, complete and permanent, to which human reason is committed. . Nature represents possibility, change and relativity, while "revelation-language" is necessity, permanence and absoluteness. The return to authenticity is a return to "revelation language", that is, to permanence. [23]

This gives rise to the problem of time in Islamic culture or, as Adonis calls it, "revelatory time,' which is characterized by permanence and stability. Unlike Greek time (*cronos*), which creates and annihilates everything it creates, revelatory time (lies outside such motion of birth and death, or the motion of change and becoming. Revelatory time is eternal. Therefore, it turns the future into past. Hence, "prophetic time" creates the optical illusion which makes the past appear as the future, and the future as the past. It restores man into the past and places the past into the future. Hence, the future becomes a form of the past. Man, therefore, moves and thinks within a past time that is a priori to his personal experience. The present. or real time, is just a fleeting occasion for reminding man of eternity. Hence, time negates man's life and his subjectivity. This is expressed by Al-Ghazali's words: "Life is a farm for the next world."[24]

Such attitude conceives of time not as a continuum, but as disconnected and discontinuous moments, or as fragments of minutes. Place also becomes a combination of disconnected points. Like time, place is a means of reminding man that life on earth is transient and a fragile bridge leading to heaven, where absolutely divine existence is encountered. The concept of causality is negated, as God alone is active, and man is only the object of His acts. In other words, man is an acquirer or an 'acquisitive being' who has no will of his own, but derives it from God's will. Man does not participate in discovering the unknown, but receives or acquires it by the will and act of God.[25]

In this sense, Arab traditionalist society seeks and finds its roots in revelation, and is inevitably tied up with the permanent and everlasting, i.e. God, rather than with the changing and transient, i.e. man. For change means incompleteness and, therefore, lies outside historical motion. Therefore, creativity and re-evaluation and innovation are deviations from the origins.

Hence, change has acquired a negative connotation, that is, deviation from permanence. Cultural values, and the whole of Arabic culture, do

not change in such a way so as to make the present different from the past. Change is accepted only insofar as it does not deviate from the origins. It has to correspond to the past, to imitate an a priori model. Change, in this sense, is growth of permanence; it is imitation and not innovation. Rejection of change implies degradation of innovation. The new opposes the old (the origins) and is, therefore, false and transient. Consequently, culture is necessarily repetitive, that is, repetition of memories and customs. Memory is the basis of time, and customs are concretization of memories. Memory represents the absolute, or heaven, and customs represent the relative, or earth. The subordination of customs to memory is a symbol of the subordination of earth to heaven. If customs are a transient present, memory is a past entity, that what the present turns into past.

In this sense, memory is the opposite of creativity. This is confirmed by the cultural significance of the etymology of the word "invention" (*bid'a*). Adonis remarks:

> Change has never been admitted into the Arab social structure to develop and transform society. On the contrary, change was regarded by the prevailing sectors as a

kind of dissent and was given the derogatory name 'inven-tion' (bid'a) to denote heresy. Moreover, inventors were called heretics, and the prominent ones among them were fought against either by being discredited and cursed, or by imprisonment and assassination.Finally, any crea-tive trend was suppressed. [26]

The rejection of invention is centered around the dogma as the major imperative for the preservation of the origins. This is expressed by the Caliph Omar Ibn El-Khattab, who defined the origins as: "Everything must be measured according to its proximity to God and its similarity to Truth."[27] This statement is further elaborated by the leader of traditionalists, Imam El-Shafi'i: "Only the Book (Quran) and Sunna (the Prophet's sayings and acts) are the Truth, and anything else is hallucination."[28] This is again confirmed by Ibn-Taimia, a leading traditionalist thinker and the theoretician of the present Islamic fundamentalist groups in the Arab world: "Anything that opposes the Book (Quran) and Sunna is absolute

falsehood."[29] He also propagated the famous saying: "Logic is heresy."

The rejection of creativity derives directly from the traditionalist notion of acquisition (*al-Kasb*). Al-Ghazali writes: "People's (God's slaves') acts are added to God's acts who initiated them by creation, and which man received by acquisition (Kasb) to be rewarded for his obedience (i.e. carrying out Allah's imperatives) and punished for his disobedience. Man's (slave's) ability exists only while performing the act, not before, during which Allah bestows upon him the ability called 'acquisition'. Hence, man does not act, and, therefore, it would not be correct to say that man creates, since the acts of creation belong only to God, who created men and their acts."[30]

With respect to acts, the concept of acquisition (*Kasb*) on the literary level corresponds to the concept of creativity, in the sense of imitation (*taqlid*), or copying tradition. It is acquisition that has already been accomplished. Therefore, the idea that the poet's role is restricted to linguistic formulation goes back to the restriction of creativity to God alone. Since language construction is God's absolute, divine ability, the poet's role is restricted to formal structure.

The idea of traditionalist jurisprudence (*fiqh*), according to which man is unable to"create his own acts, has an equivalent in the literary traditionalist trend (concerning language and poetry). Poetry is also the acquisition of what has been originally founded, and the poet is unable to surpass the origins.

The absolute call for blind imitation of sacred origins means an equally absolute and dogmatic rejection of interpretation. Hence, traditionalism or salafia is inevitably against interpretation, as the latter means doubt, and skeptical talk about God's qualities is inadmissible. A man who interprets a Quranic version in a way that contradicts God's intention commits an unpardonable sin, as such an attitude reveals the position of the Prophet's opponents.[31]

This dogmatic attitude appears most clearly in relation to poetry and language. Adonis tells us that traditionalists maintain that Arabic poetry is a unique, unmatchable phenomenon in history. They also think that what is said about the poetry of other peoples does not apply to Arabic poetry. Therefore, it is restricted only to the Arabs. It is also believed that Arabic language is superior to all other languages. Others claim that Arabic language is like Allah, whom no human can fully understand because, as Ibn Faris,

one of the traditionalists, said: "Only a prophet can understand the language of the Arabs."[32]

In poetry, the poet reproduces what is imprinted on the nation's mind and taste. In other words, poetry is the reproduction of the collective memory or collective unconscious, and the more authentic the poet's reproduction, the more poetic it is. The nation's mind and taste are ethical factors; therefore, praise (i.e. good morals) and invective (bad morals) are the predominant themes in Arabic poetry.

Consequently, poetry - on the level of theory - means following the model of the ancients. On the level of practice, it is connected with values inherited from the ancients who constitute the authority. Such an authority is the symbol of safeguarding and preserving these values. On the level of expression, poetry is the unification of the name and the named. Hence, poetry, like religion, becomes identical with truth.[33]

Further on, Adonis tells us that the meaning of "poet" in the Quran is equivalent to the insane, the magician, the priest, and Satan. This correlation, Adonis explains, implies that poetry does not speak about the truth. It is the work of the devil, who turns

falsehood into truth and vice into virtue. This means, however, that the impact of magic on poetry is latent and can only be revealed by God's will. Therefore, the Quran is not poetry, and after Islam poetry was related to religious values and became a tool in the service of religion. This new function of poetry after Islam is mentioned in the Quran and in the Prophet's sayings.[34]

Here a major question arises:

If interpretation is rejected, what are the possibilities of introducing hermeneutics into Arabic language and literature?

Adonis, in his descriptive approach, gives an indirect answer. He refers to the etymology of religion as "Religion is language". This total identification of religion with language means that religion is eternal revelation. This literary attitude originates from a religious attitude established by the traditionalist trend.[35]

Adonis states that hermeneutics, or the interpretation of sacred texts, is almost impossible in Arabic culture. For religion is eternal revelation, whereas thought or philosophy is a human artifice; if

we proclaim the subjugation of revelation to the logic of thought or philosophy, it means that we accept that revelation is liable to change. This, in turn, could lead to the elimination of revelation. Moreover, revelation is the last word, while in philosophy there is no last word. Furthermore, subjecting revelation to philosophy means equating God's words with those of man.[36]

This explains the difference between Christian theology and what is known as the "science of kalam" in Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*). Kalam deals with the divine traits of the word (parole), by means of discussions concerning God and the things related to God. (It is also mentioned as the "science of *tawhid*" [divine unicity], and also known as the "science of discourse"; it might as well be called "Islamic theology".) In Christianity, theology emerged as a science in the context of philosophy, i.e. rational, logical interpretation of religious dogma with the purpose of investigating man's knowledge of the attributes of God. Whereas Christian theology is basically illuminatory, besides being apologetic, the unique function of kalam is the apologetic. Due to the predominantly verbal nature of Islamic culture, the 'science of kalam" emerged and developed within the strict bounds of verbal interpretation. Therefore, any

linguistic interpretation of religious texts can only be confined to the verbal level (as opposed to that of philosophy), i.e. to the domain of words rather than that of ideas.

Adonis concludes that the complete identification of religion, language and poetry, being a predominant feature in traditionalist Arabic culture, led to the following results:

1) Separation of language from meaning, i.e. separation of form and content. Hence, the forms of expression in poetic tradition are complete and should be imitated, being the origins.

2) Poetry is not creation; it is craftsmanship. The poet does not invent new forms but recalls or reproduces the original forms in their original language.

3) Poetic tradition, like the tradition of revelation, is old. In it perfection has been obtained once and for all. This means that in poetry perfection lies neither in the present nor in the future but in the past, which means absolute negation of the possibility of creativity or even innovation. Hence, it is no longer a problem of the old versus the new, but the question of the permanent origins which

are everlastingly new and more perfect than any novel attempt.

4) The jurist (*fiqhi*) has become the symbol of Arabic culture, and Arabic thought has become juristic. Any juristic thought, by nature, is necessarily traditionary (*naqli*). Such a juristic view has been applied to poetry. As language has sacred, ultimate origins which have been realized in the ideal model of the Quran, in the Prophet's life and in that of the Caliphs, poetry also has ultimate origins, which are almost sacred and are realized in their ideal form in *djahilia* and at the beginning of Islam.

5) Arabic thought became normative, which measures the present and the future by the standards of the past, irrespective of experience and evolution, to the extent that the present and the future are considered symbols of decadence and backwardness.[37]

This gave rise to a major feature of the Arab personality, which manifests itself on the level of linguistic expression, namely, separation of meaning from speech. This is expressed by the belief that meaning is prior to speech, speech being only a form

or a decorated image of meaning. Adonis maintains that this feature manifests itself in the Arab's preference for oral, verbal rhetoric because it is nearest to the imitation of divine utterance or revelation. Written language is simply utterance temporalized; it is the faint shadow of utterance. Although the function of poetry changed after Islam, its form did not change. This is again confirmed by the separation of speech from meaning, or form from content, which makes poetic expression a kind of identification between old speech and meaning. This meaning is the truth, that is, Islam and its values. This explains why the Arabs look upon pre-Islamic poetry and language from a religious perspective. That is because the miracle of the Quran depends on pre-Islamic miracle. When the Quran challenged pre-Islamic poetry it did so in the sense of being perfect, the ideal of rhetoric. Hence, it acquired a religious dimension and made the Arab's consciousness of his past and culture as a religious one, to which he has to adapt. Since the expression of truth is clear, and truth is logical and rational, therefore imagination should be avoided because it is a state between sensations and reason, which does not lead to definite knowledge, but rather to doubt.[38]

Finally Adonis finds the antidote for the predominance of permanence in Arabic culture in liberation from *salafia* (traditionalism) and in abolition of the sacredness of the past which should be studied as a part of human experience and human knowledge. Besides, man should be considered as a creative being, not just a preserver or memory of tradition:[39] a conclusion very similar to the one reached by Taha Hussein.

As has already been demonstrated in the aforegoing, the development of language can happen only through the complete control of language - so long as the origin of language coincides with the origin of civilization. The control of language comes out of man's ability to control the outside world, the natural and the social. The more man is unable to control the outside world, the weaker becomes his ability to control language.

Now the question is:

What kind of remedy does Adonis propose to achieve such a control over language?

Adonis's, phenomenological method and his diagnostic approach to the problem of permanence and change show that Arabic culture has been isolated from their cultural roots, and instead of representing evolution they fell into a kind of involution by becoming stagnant and stopping at the level of one specific stage of progress, namely, that of Arab bedouinism and tribalism. In this way, Arabic culture has been separated from labour and experience which are the result of direct contact with nature. The concept of acquisition (Kasb) in Arabic culture conceives of labour not as production in the sense of transformation of nature, but stops at the level of consumption of nature as a divine endowment. The Arab accepts modern Western civilizational products, but rejects the rational principles that invented these achievements. Real modernity, however, lies in the act of creativity and not in the products in themselves.[40] The Arab, thus, rejects real modernity, which is equivalent to rejecting doubt, experimentation, and unconditioned freedom of research, and the adventurous spirit of discovering the unknown.

It is observed rightly that the Arabs are not engaged in technological production, which means that the making of machines, as distinct from their use, remains alien. This annihilation of the process of

making is the outcome of the negation of change and innovation on the pretence of preserving the authentic identity which lies in the past. The result is maintaining the consumer-producer relation between the Arabs and the West. Moreover, the acceptance of Western technology and the rejection of the cultural values attached to that technology, point to the Arabs' concept of modern culture. This attitude reduces culture to technology, which means de-ideologization of technology and emptying technology from its cultural content. Hence, the West provides Arab societies with technological gadgets after removing the cultural values inherent in them.[41] In this way, any possibility of a genuine cultural, creative assimilation is prevented, and the consumer-producer relation between the Arabs and the West is preserved in an ever-growing state of tension. This tension, leading to all kinds of crises, makes the Arab-West relation one of confrontation, despite the apparent harmony. For, while the Arabs accept economic dependence on the West, they reject the idea of establishing a genuine cultural dialogue with it.

When advocating liberation from traditionalism, Adonis falls into a number of contradictions: the first one has to do with what he calls the destruction of tradition, or the elimination of old, traditionalist

structures. Adonis insists that this destruction should not and cannot be attempted with a tool outside Arabic tradition; it must be done with a tool from within Arabic culture. Such a destruction should not relate to a past other than that of the Arabs, or to any tradition other than Arabic tradition. However he adds, the attitude toward tradition should be determined in terms of change, and the elements of tradition should become parts of the future.[42]

The contradiction here is twofold: first, Adonis equates change and destruction. In this sense, he stops at the level of negation and does not surpass it to the negation of negation. He rejects the traditionalist ideology of permanence, but is unable and unwilling to surpass it to a futuristic alternative ideology of change. In other words, he stops at the level of destruction, or "de-ism , and does not surpass it to that of reconstruction, or "re-ism". [43] Secondly, by insisting on authenticity alone as a major factor in the development of Arabic culture and language, Adonis negates the concept of dialectic which he himself advocates.

The second contradiction is that Adonis's idea about the destruction of tradition turns the essentially dialectical relation between tradition and authenticity

into a formal one. Such a non-dialectical thought appears in his assumption of the irreconcilability of opposition between the development of Arabic language and culture from within, i.e. by means of authenticity, and from the outside, i.e. by tools of the modern age or, more strictly speaking, modernity.

The relation between authenticity and modernity is characterized by a contradiction of unity and opposition, as authenticity, by time, is turned into tradition. Therefore, to assume that the unity between them is irreconcilable, is to cancel dialectic.

This raises the problem of authenticity and modernization, which has been troubling Arab intellectuals for almost a century. The first contact with the West produced an acute cultural crisis based on a contradiction between a desired communication with the West and an actual separation. This insoluble contradiction, which goes back to the eighteenth century, produced the famous dichotomy known in the circles of Arab intellectuals as the problem of authenticity and modernization. This relation between the two concepts is problematic, for it implies an inherent contradiction arising from the wish to become modern without losing one's identity. In this sense, identity is seen in a past rather than in a future

context. Authenticity, on the other hand, is a term often used in developing countries, referring to their national identity. As a reaction to imperialism, national liberation movements identify their policy of de-colonization with that of de-westernization that has separated these countries from their traditional cultural roots. This dichotomy between East and West isolates Arabic culture from human civilization and cuts it off from its universal roots.

In one of his articles, Adonis says that the Arab poet could create what contradicts, in content and form, a the poetry of his ancestors, and still remain Arabic.[44] That is, he could be influenced by poets from a different culture (for example, Europe) and still continue to preserve his own culture, which is expressed in his own language (Arabic). This proves that Adonis regards language as a mere receptacle and not an integrated style of thought and life. For, as long as Arabic language, as Adonis himself admits, is predominantly permanent and stagnant, it is highly difficult and improbable for such a culture to assimilate the poetry produced by another culture characterized by change and dynamism. Any attempt to develop the language through tradition (i.e. permanence) will be doomed to failure because such a

culture does not possess the tools of its own development.

One might ask: How can we account for the contradictions in Adonis's arguments?

In my opinion, these contradictions can be approached by the method Adonis employs, namely by the phenomenological method. This method depends on the description of phenomena after isolating them from the field within which they emerged. This method also rejects dialectical contradictions and acknowledges only formal logic based on the principle of non-contradiction. Therefore, Adonis falls into illegitimate contradictions, such as the contradiction between developing language from within and from outside Arabic tradition, and the contradiction between Arabic and European poetry.

This method is also responsible for Adonis's negation of any futuristic view. He writes: "My study is a plan to describe Arabic culture as it is in its permanence and change, with the purpose of understanding it in order to change it as it should be. However, it is not my intention to put forward a method of change or to propagate a futuristic view of

Arabic culture and literature because change grows empirically out of a changing society.[45] Adonis's insistence on experience and practice as the only criteria to realize change reveals a non-dialectical view, as it separates practice from theory - whereas thought is influenced by practice and vice versa. Moreover, such a view contradicts his own diagnosis of Arabic society as being predominantly permanent, i.e. against change.

On the other hand, there is yet another, probably more essential reason for Adonis's advocacy of tradition and authenticity and his abstinence from venturing any futuristic view of change. I mean his Arabic cultural and mental structures (bias), or his unequivocal, ethnic belonging to Arabic tradition. In his more recent articles and interviews Adonis apologetically declares his return to his absolutely Arab roots and his belonging to Arabic culture.[46] He, thus, negates any possibility of a cultural dialogue between Arabic and Western cultures based on the principle of a mutually creative, critical assimilation. By glorifying Arabic culture and literature, in isolation from world literature and culture, he absolutizes Arabic culture. By absolutization he belittles logos.

This is again confirmed by Adonis in another article which reads as follows: "The poet, when composing a poem, proceeds from a state of enchantment which is illogical, irrational and unintellectual."[47] However, in the same article Adonis advises the revolutionary vanguard to criticize mythical thinking which is an obstacle hindering the development of revolutionary consciousness because it "helps in the reinforcement and continuation of past culture".[48] This almost schizoid contradiction between the first and second statement reveals the personal conflict within Adonis the poet, on the one hand, and the critic and political thinker, on the other.

Anyhow, despite the foregoing critique, one cannot deny the intellectual courage with which Adonis conducts his critical investigation to unravel the roots of backwardness and stagnation in Arabic culture.

This attempt, in its own right, is a highly important one and is highly required for the spreading of the critical tendency within Arabic traditionalist culture in order to promote its development into trends instead of being limited to individuals. Such critical studies help in shedding light on the nature of Arabic culture and in the long run could produce an

Arab movement of enlightenment that carries out hermeneutical studies within the fields of religion, language and literature. Such a movement, particularly within the field of literary criticism, could lead to the development of Arabic culture.

Finally, a crucial question remains: Is there any possibility of such a movement occuring in the future? In answer- and to confirm my point of view put forward in the foregoing pages - I would like to quote some of the recommendations of the First World Conference on Muslim Education held in Mecca in 1977:

> The ultimate aim of Muslim education lies in the realization of complete submission to Allah on the level of the individual, the community and humanity at large. In order to achieve the ultimate aims and objectives of education, knowledge must be classified into the following two categories:
>
> a) Given "perennial knowledge" or the Divine revelation presented in the Quran and Sunna and all that can be derived from them with emphasis on the Arabic language as the key to the understanding of

both. b) "Acquired knowledge" including social, natural and applied science susceptible to quantitative growth and multiplication, limited variations and cross-cultural borrowings as long as consistency with the Shari'ah as the source of values is maintained. There must be a core knowledge drawn from both with major emphasis on the first, specially on the Shari'ah which must be made obligatory to all Muslims at all levels of the educational system from the highest to the lowest, graduated to conform to the standards of each level. This, along with the compulsory teaching of Arabic should form the major section of the core curriculum. These two alone can sustain Islamic civilisation and preserve the identity of the Muslims. 49

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4. Walter Benjamin, 'The Task of the Translator', Illuminations, ed. Hanna Arendt, New York, Harcourt Brace and World 1968, p. 7.
5. This is particularly demonstrated by the patriarchal nature of language which is influenced by man's most basic ideas about human nature and about man's relation to the universe and his role In society. For example, the words "spinster" and "bachelor" both refer to the state of being unmarried. However, "spinster" being applied only to women evokes the idea of being rejected and unwanted, while the word "bachelor" marks physical and social attraction. Dale Spender, Men Made Language, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul 1983.
6. Mona Abousenna, 'Drama from Mythos to Logos', Proceedings of the International Conference in

Comparative Drama, Cairo, America University Press 1984, pp. 89-100.

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8. Anthony Burgess, English Literature, London, Longman 197S, p. 45.

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10. Heidegger, Unterwegs Zur Sprache, Pfullingen, Nesku 1959, p. 96.

11. Adonis (Ali Ahmed Saiid), Permanence and Change, Vol. I (The Origins), Beirut, Dar al-Awda 1974; Taha Hussein, On Pre-Islamic Poetry, Cairo, Dal al-Kottob 1926.

12. T. Hussein, pp. 11-12

13. Ibic, p. 16

14. Ibid, p. 35

15. Ibid, p. 36

16. Ibid p. 37

17. Ibid., p. 46.

18. This feature is confirmed by recent articles written by the famous thinker and critic Louis Awad and

published in the weekly Egyptian magazine AlMossawar under the title 'History and Myth' in which he confirms the predominance of mythos 'in Arabic culture as manifested in the interpretation of history.

19. Ibid., pp. 38-39.

20. Ibid., p. 77.

21. Ibid., p. 45-46.

22 Adonis, pp. 35.

23. Ibid., p. 37.

24. Ibid., p. 39.

25. Ibid., p. 38.

26. Ibid., pp. 26-2i.

27. Ibid., p. 41.

28. Ibid. p. 41

29. Ibid. p. 41

30. Ibid., pp. 45-46

31. Ibid., p. 45.

32. Ibid., p. 53.

33. Ibid. p. 66

34. Ibid., p. 146.

35. Ibid. pp. 66-67.

36. Ibid., p. 67.

37. Ibid., pp. 73-76.

38. Ibid., p. 30.

39. Ibid., p. 33.

40. Mona Abousenna, 'Absolutes and Development in Contemporary Arab Thought', Proceedings of the Second Afro-Asian Philosophy Conference on "Philosophy and Cultures", Nairobi, Bookwise Limited 1983, pp. 55-59.

41. Mona Abousenna, 'Egypt at the Crossroads', Proceedings of the Seminar on "Open-Door Policy and the Egyptian Social System" (Cairo 1984; in print).

42. Adonis, op.cit., p. 33.

43. Mourad Wahba, *Essays in Philosophical and Political* Cairo, Anglo-Egyptian Bookshop, 1978.

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44. Adonis, 'Poets: Be authentic to the extent of Alienation', Al-Thawra, 22 November 1975.

45. Adonis, op.cit., p. 32.

46. M. Gaber A1-Anssari, 'They differ even about the Arabhood of Culture', A1-Saiyad, Beirut 17 April, No. 2059, p. 27.

47. Adonis, Interview, A1-Thawra, 1975.

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Philosophy and Foundations of Culture with Special Reference to Africa

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This article is concerned with the conjunction that 'man creates culture and tends to objectify it'. Reflecting on each one of the conjuncts we shall see the implications of the conjunction in intercultural relations with special reference to Africa and general pertinence to other countries as well.

The first conjunct, namely, that 'man creates culture' is often uttered in cultural studies but the deeper implications of this assertion tend' to be overlooked, thus creating a situation whereby the statement in question becomes a meaningless slogan. The second part of the conjunction, where man's tendency to objectify the culture he has created is asserted, can hardly be said to be a popular contention in cultural studies, yet it has far-reaching implications for intercultural relations; this pole of the conjunction gives us a clue as regards the dogmatic and uncompromising manner in which colonial administrators and Christian missionaries introduced

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Western culture (politics, economics, religion etc.) in Africa. These administrators and missionaries, and any others who have performed a similar task, will henceforth be referred to as 'cultural vectors'.

The behaviour of these cultural vectors points to the fact that man, after creating culture can give such a culture a certain 'objective' status, as if the culture is, in the language of naive realism, "out there real" with no 'subjective' involvement. Indeed it can be argued that the culture that these cultural vectors propagated had already been institutionalized and had acquired a historical status and that its 'subjective roots' had already been forgotten. If it were to be argued this way the mentioned cultural vectors would be seen as victim of the socialization process that they had undergone without ever having an insight into the subjective status of the ideas, behaviour patterns etc. they were socialized into.

Our concern, then, is to transcend socialization or cultural conditioning and reach the individuals or group of individuals who are responsible for the ideas, behaviour patterns etc.that others objectify. Culture, therefore, whether expressed in science, philosophy or religion must be seen as the work of man, as a 'subjective' human undertaking. As 'Subjective', that is, work of a 'subject' there is room for fallibility. This

possibility of fallibility has been noted and actualized, for instance, in the history of science and theology- The question can, however, be asked whether what some religions call 'revelation' is strictly the work of man. What is clear is that the words we associate with 'revelation' are uttered by man- Whether there is "more than" man in this would depend on whether a person's conceptual space would allow this "more than" man that is sometimes described in terms of *'spirits' or 'divinity'.*

The essential point in our consideration is not whether revelation can be in people's "conceptual space" or rather "spaces". There is no doubt that various conceptual spaces can accept "revelations' but *the way* that "revelation" would be understood would be determined by that space. For instance, a thoroughgoing empiricist can accept 'revelation" but within his conceptual space "revelation" would acquire non-supernaturalistic connotations it would be described in naturalistic terms. A Hegelian rationalist would perhaps see revelation as a moment *in* the Absolute's intervention in history. Of course this Hegelian version of revelation would hardly put what religions call 'revelation" in any special category, for it could be argued that even scientific

discovery is a form of "revelation", a moment in the Absolute's self-manifestation.

Our concern here is not whether revelation *can* be within people's conceptual spaces and the meaning it acquires in such spaces . Rather, what we are anxious to establish is that whether one understands "revelation" in naturalistic or purely metaphysical (e.g. Hegelian) or in supernaturalistic terms in the final analysis it is man who says "this is revelation"- The heart of the matter is that the statement *can be false* given that it flows from human subjectivity; to "prove" this point further it is worth pointing out that we are not prepared to call anything revelation just because someone claims it is but rather we "judge " what we are to call 'revelation" and what we are to deny such description. And in so doing we cannot rule out fallibility relative to whatever criterion we may use for the application of the concept "revelation".

These considerations of the concept of "revelation" are not my main concern here. They are mentioned in order to vindicate the proposition that the cultural vectors that we have been discussing appear to have glossed over the fundamental point that they were imposing their "subjectivity" on Africa and many other Third World countries in the name of religion, sound politics, economics etc. This

subjectivity, which was assumed to be objectivity, is shown by philosophical reflection to be objectivised subjectivity, an insight which may take time to be attained in Africa and elsewhere. Indeed there have been, and are, moments when the African has objectivized the structures that he has inherited from the mentioned cultural vectors. In those moments the African has tended to seek outside his own subjectivity the criteria for worthwhile knowledge and even ethical and aesthetic judgements.[1] In this connection it is worth referring to the perpetuation of irrelevant syllabuses on schools, conservation of legal systems which reflect the culture of the mentioned "cultural vectors", economic and political philosophies which are notably capitalistic etc.

There is now a growing antithetical reaction to this influence. A number of factors that have contributed to this antithesis can now be mentioned. First, the attainment of independence (political) in Africa has given the African a "feel of creativity" as they run their own affairs, occasionally trying to bring about cultural authenticity. Second, there is *increasing aggressive* literature that disparages colonial inheritance.[2] Third, there is the rise of critical philosophy in Africa that has been seeking an alternative social and political philosophy. Critical

philosophy has learnt to delve into African subjectivity and propose new philosophies for African development.

It is worth pointing out that in their question for new philosophies African thinkers have not been thinking in isolation from others elsewhere, generally speaking. They seem to intuit the idea that to delve into one's own subjectivity is not tantamount to rejecting outside influences and ideas. They seem to see that what is essential is not rejection of cultural borrowing but rather it is ensuring that what the African does flows from his own subjectivity whether it is a creative move, a borrowing act or a lending one!

In this connection if we glance at Kwame Nkrumah's social philosophy in his book entitled *Consciencism* we note that he combines Marxism with African traditionalism. Metaphysically, that is regarding his view of reality, Nkrumah upholds a materialistic thesis characterized by reduction of all that exists to matter. From this reductionism of all things to matter Nkrumah dismantles divine hierarchies and asserts we are all equal in view of our origin in matter. Thus he derives his concept of equality from metaphysics.

The social expression of this equality becomes socialism in his scheme. But then he differs from conventional Marxism by maintaining that African traditional communalism accords well with socialism and that to attain socialism in Africa, reform rather than revolution should *be the African's way. Nyerere* of Tanzania also maintains that socialism need not be attained via capitalism, a presupposition in Marx's thought. Nyerere aims at building socialism on the foundations of 'Ujamaa', (familyhood') which is seen by him to be a traditional value. Even though Nyerere bases his socialism on Ujamaa, a traditional value, it appears he has been open to other ways of achieving socialism as long as they are relevant to the Tanzanian situation, and indeed he had to delve into aspects of the Marxist theory to see whether it would work in Tanzania. Senghor is more eclectic in his social philosophy especially as it appears in his book entitled *On Socialism* where he combines Marxist humanism, the philosophy of the Jesuit priest Teilhard de Chardin and traditional African communalism.

What is vital in this brief consideration of the philosophical positions of Nkrumah, Nyerere and Senghor is not as much the question of the philosophical tenability of their positions; we are not indulging in a philosophical critique of their works.

We are simply indicating that the emergence of African subjectivity in Philosophy has not meant working in isolation from other thinkers elsewhere. Hence the proposition that man creates culture should not be interpreted to mean that he should not learn from the experiences of others. Our position here is that if he should borrow from others he should be deeply conscious of the fact that what he borrows is man's creation, an expression of a certain subjectivity, and not an 'object out there real' to be mentally assimilated.

This brings us to the position that it is the prerogative of Africa and other Third World countries to give allegiance to their different forms of subjectivity and choose among competing philosophies and ideologies in accordance with their own subjectivity -- while continuing to formulate new philosophies and ideologies. Standing firmly on the ground of their own subjectivity the people of Africa, unless they have objectified religions, philosophies and ideologies in the sense of the objectification that we have treated above, should be in a position to see that Africa need not be Christian, Marxist, Islamic, capitalist etc- There is need of intellectual detachment in the face of these religions and ideologies including even what we may call "traditional African culture

and religion". Indeed the famous Ghanian philosopher, Kwasi Wiredu, in his book *Philosophy and an African Culture* does point out the weaknesses of traditionalism, for example , supernaturalism and authoritarianism. If we do not absolve our own traditions from subjection to critical reflection why should we spare Marxism, Christianity, Islam and Capitalism. If we, as philosophers, have to fulfill our philosophical task, we cannot consider anything to be sacrosanct for any assertion that something is sacrocant in a human claim, flowing from a certain subjectivity, and open to philosophical reflection and criticism[3].

On what grounds do we judge these ideologies, religions, etc? There are at least two vital grounds that need to be mentioned. First, there is the epistemological ground on the basis of which the claims of these ideologies and religions are examined in terms of the logic of their terms, cognitive content of the statements expressed by those terms, as well as justification of the assertions relevant to each ideology, religion or philosophy. The second ground is ethical. Here we are concerned to establish whether these ideologies, philosophies and religions promote the good life of our people who for instance in Africa and other Third World Countries, suffer a form of

material poverty that threatens personal existence of these peoples. In the face of this deplorable situation the question can be raised regarding the appropriate philosophy, religion or ideology that can be effective in the enhancement of better life in these countriesئ

In particular we are in need of a philosophy that will enable us to overcome what may prima facie appear to be intractable determinisms or, in terms of existential phenomenology, 'forms of facticity' but which in reality can be changed. It must be a philosophy of hope buttressed by relevant, ceaseless and indefatigable efforts seeking the object of the hope.

This philosophy, if it is to adequately overcome the mentioned problems, must seek pan-African co-operation on the one hand and Third World collaboration on the other in the face of the politically mighty powers that try to ensure that the economy, politics and ideology of the Third World sing to their tune. We need a humanistic Third World Culture which should be in a position to compete with technologically and economically mightier counties and thus endeavor to bring about a balance of political, economic and technological power. This would ensure a more equitable share of the resources

of the earth and a greater share in the better things of life such as knowledge, moral and aesthetic values which are rendered difficult to achieve by the deprivations we have mentioned.

This call for the unity of the Third World hinges on the fact that ethnic, racial or religious homogeneity can no longer be an adequate basis for s survival in the modern world. We have to forget our ethnic and racial origins for the sake of the common goal of working for the survival of man and the improvement of his living condition.

Notes

1. R. J. Njoroge, see "The meaning of life in the African Social Context" in Dialectics and Humanism No. 2, 1981 p. 115
2. See Okot p'Bitek' article on " On Culture, Man and Freedom", in *Philosophy and Cultures* by H. Odera Oruka & D. A. Masolo (Eds.) (Bookwise Limited, 1983). This book constitutes the proceedings of 2nd. Afro-Asian Philosophy Conference, held in Nairobi in 1981.
3. Kwasi Wiredu: *Philosophy and an African Culture*, CYP, 1930 (first Chapter)

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